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SECRETARY-GENERAL'S BULLETIN

UNITED NATIONS PERSONNEL POLICY ON HIV/AIDS

One of the sad crises we all must face together as the United Nations family is the continuing spread of a devastating and terrifying disease: HIV/AIDS. We have watched with growing concern as ever-increasing numbers of people are affected by this pandemic, which has yet to be overcome anywhere in the world. As we await a cure, we must join together to support those who suffer from this terrible disease, and to educate and inform ourselves about what we can do to slow its progress.

On the occasion of World AIDS Day, 1 December, I wish to extend to all individuals and families afflicted with HIV/AIDS my personal message of encouragement and support, with special attention to United Nations staff members. The United Nations is committed to providing a compassionate and supportive work environment, without regard to HIV status. I would like to take this opportunity to urge all staff members to join with me in ensuring that our workplace reflects our policy and our values.

One of our greatest weapons against HIV/AIDS is knowledge. It is part of our HIV/AIDS personnel policy that all United Nations staff should be provided with sufficient, updated information to enable you to protect yourselves and your families from HIV infection and to cope with the presence of AIDS. You will be receiving shortly a copy of the booklet, "AIDS and HIV infection: Information for United Nations Employees and their Families", which has been recently updated by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). This booklet provides facts and information about prevention, testing and getting help. I encourage you to read it carefully, to share the information with your families, and to make use of the extensive resource list to answer your questions.

The United Nations Development Group has established a Task Force to raise awareness of the HIV/AIDS issue as it concerns staff and their dependants living with HIV/AIDS, and to ensure that staff are fully informed on the United Nations personnel policy on HIV/AIDS and of the social security provisions available. Many of you will have the opportunity in the coming months to participate in one of the briefing events being planned as part of a multi-agency effort. I encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to learn more about the role you can play.

Using the tools we have available -- research, education and compassion -- let us do all we can, individually and together, to strengthen our response in the face of this disease.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN
Secretary-General

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